

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 21, 2023

The Honorable Tracy Stone-Manning
Director
Bureau of Land Management
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Director Stone-Manning,

America deserves advantageous policies and transparent rhetoric that encourage American energy production, not hinder it. In 2023, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA)⁴, global oil demand is estimated to increase by two million barrels per day to more than 100 million barrels used daily around the world. That demand will be met one way or another, and if America does not meet it, it will be met by countries that do not share our security interests, environmental standards, or values. As the world's leading oil-and-natural-gas producing nation, America has the resources, innovation, and desire to deliver.

Recently, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) updated its number of unused Approved Permits to Drill, lowering it from 9,000 to 6,600 approved permits. BLM attributed this substantial 26 percent decrease to a “reporting discrepancy, the result of a transition to a new database in mid-2020.”¹

This error is particularly shocking given the White House, including former Press Secretary Jen Psaki, consistently cited the 9,000 unused permits to drill² as a rationale to not follow the law, regarding conducting timely onshore and offshore federal oil and gas lease sales. While Americans struggled to pay for high gasoline and energy prices, the administration repeatedly cited faulty statistics to justify their inaction to support increasing production of oil and gas in the United States. This revelation is especially upsetting given that BLM is fully aware that many of these permits are in litigation, require other administrative actions, or require access to additional federal acreage to develop.

We would like to know:

- 1.) When did you become aware of this discrepancy? We have noted that monthly reports BLM publishes on its website (<https://www.blm.gov/programs/energy-and-minerals/oil-and-gas/operations-and-production/permitting/applications-permits-drill>) are missing for October and November, 2022 – a timeframe which coincides with the midterm elections.

¹ See, e.g., <https://www.blm.gov/programs/energy-and-minerals/oil-and-gas/operations-and-production/permitting/applications-permits-drill>

² See, e.g., <https://twitter.com/cspan/status/1500942299446095877> and <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/eenews/2023/02/27/interior-data-counters-biden-statements-on-9-000-oil-permits-00084411>

⁴See, e.g., <https://www.iea.org/reports/oil-market-report-february-2023>

- 2.) What internal decisionmakers developed and approved the decision to correct these numbers with merely a single sentence footnote added to the December 2022 and January 2023 reports?
- 3.) How did this discrepancy occur?
- 4.) What steps are being taken to prevent similar discrepancies from occurring in the future?
- 5.) Given that it took well over a year to identify and correct this error, how can we be confident in the accuracy of the rest of BLM's data?
- 6.) What are the annual totals for 2021 and 2022 concerning: submitted permits to drill; approved permits to drill; unused permits to drill; used permits to drill; and expired permits to drill?
- 7.) How many of these permits are currently under litigation?
- 8.) How many of these permits are waiting for other required administrative actions before the permit is actionable?
- 9.) How many permits require access to new leasing of adjacent parcels, in order to make the project economical or technically feasible?

This administration has slowed new leasing to the lowest point since World War II. It has been 264 days since the Department of the Interior allowed the five-year offshore leasing program to expire without a new finalized program in place, and the administration held just one round of quarterly lease sales in 2022 after not holding any in 2021, as required by law³.

We look forward to your answers to these questions. The timely leasing of federal minerals as required by law is a core part of the BLM's function, as is correctly communicating the statistics regarding your progress on that front to the American people.

Sincerely,



Markwayne Mullin
United States Senator



Kevin Cramer
United States Senator

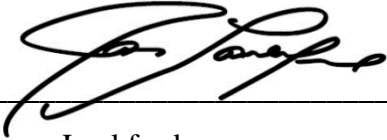
³ 30 U.S.C. § 226(b)(1)(A)



Ted Cruz
United States Senator



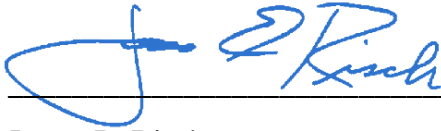
John Hoeven
United States Senator



James Lankford
United States Senator



Mike Braun
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